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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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COMMITTEE ON RULES
APPROPRIATIONS
TRANSPORTATION, AND HOUSING AND
URBAN DEVELOPMENT, AND RELATED AGENCIES
STATE, FOREIGN OPERATIONS, AND
RELATED PROGRAMS
FINANCIAL SERVICES AND
GENERAL GOVERNMENT
REGIONAL WHIP

June 2, 2022

The Honorable Pete Buttigieg
U.S. Department of Transportation
1200 New Jersey Avenue SE
Washington, D.C. 20590

Dear Secretary Buttigieg,

Thank you for your work to improve our nation's infrastructure, access to transit options, and expanding economic opportunity. I appreciate your willingness to always talk with Congress, and to consider the needs of our local communities. As you continue to implement the Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Act, as well as the fiscal year 2022 Transportation, Housing and Urban Development Appropriations bill, I wanted to outline issues of importance to my district that I hope to continue working on with you going forward.

California's Inland Empire is a transportation and logistics hub, yet my constituents still all too often lack access to affordable, reliable transportation options. The *Infrastructure Investment and Jobs Law* combined with annual federal funding present a unique opportunity to invest in our aging infrastructure and ensure disadvantaged communities are not left behind. As a member of the Transportation, Housing, and Urban Development Appropriations Subcommittee with oversight over these funds, I am pleased by the progress made in the FY 2022 bill and will continue to prioritize these issues in fiscal year 2023. I will strongly support your efforts to equitably build up our nation's transportation, which allows constituents to access the jobs, housing, and recreational space they need to thrive.

Particularly, I am working in Congress to include:

- **Transportation Equity:** As mentioned in your budget request to Congress, a shared priority is ensuring equity is a metric for surface transportation funding decisions. In the FY2022 enacted bill, I worked to secure \$1.5 million for DOT to conduct a study through the Transportation Research Board to identify, assess, and develop metrics for measuring the effectiveness of surface transportation projects in addressing transportation challenges and barriers faced by historically disadvantaged communities, areas of persistent poverty, and public transportation-dependent populations. Additionally, the enacted bill included language ensuring additional studies on how federal DOT and State and local DOT consider equity in funding decisions. I look forward on continuing to work together on ensuring that equity is a metric for transportation funding and would appreciate an update on the funding already appropriated for this purpose.

- **Regional Infrastructure Accelerators:** Support for the Regional Infrastructure Accelerators program, which helps leverage Department of Transportation (DOT) funding by providing assistance to regional entities as they develop transportation infrastructure programs and projects that could be eligible for DOT credit assistance. I included authorization for this program in the 2015 *Fast Act* but under the Trump Administration the program was not scheduled to become operational until September of this year. In the FY2022 enacted bill, I worked to secure \$12 million for this program and look forward to continuing investing in the development of communities similar to the Inland Empire.
- **Transit-Oriented Development:** Transit-Oriented Development policies support the synergetic relationship between affordable housing and transportation development. My legislation, the “Sustainable Communities Act,” works to ensure an all of government approach to supporting helping localities provide more transportation options, develop more affordable housing, and improve the livability of communities. This month, the Biden Administration announced its housing supply action plan, which includes reforming zones and land-use policies, an initiative very similar to Sustainable Communities. In the FY2022 enacted bill, I worked to include language that focuses DOT on Transit-Oriented Development and planning grants. I look forward to working with you on this initiative and continue to lead in Congress on this.
- **Air Quality:** My district has the one of the worst air qualities in the district. We are surrounded by multiple freeways, which cause traffic congestion and air pollution. Also, during wildfire season, the air quality is at its worst with my district breathing in ash, smog, and smoke. At the intersection of climate change and equity lies clean air issues. That is why for FY2023, I am prioritizing focusing on ensuring transit options in the areas of the country with the worst air quality.
- **Thriving Communities Initiative:** For the FY2022 enacted bill, I supported the creation of the Thriving Communities Initiative, which provided \$25 million for DOT and \$5 million for HUD. The program is essential for districts like mine because it will foster equitable economic growth, reduce transportation cost-burden, improve public health and mobility, and increase access to economic opportunity. For FY2023, I am working in Congress to provide funding for this much-needed program, and would appreciate an update on your coordination with the Department of Housing and Urban Development on this work.
- **Transit Workers:** Transit workers are essential in making sure we get to our destinations safely. Transit workers have witnessed or been the victim of a violent crime when trying to do their job. Violent crimes have jumped 81% for the first two months of this year on the Los Angeles County Metropolitan Transportation Authority’s bus and rail system.¹ About 85% of nearly 5,000 U.S. flight attendants said they've dealt with an unruly passenger in 2021, and 17% said they've been physically assaulted.² Additionally, one of the most common employment sectors for those who live in Fontana, CA, are

¹ <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-05-11/metro-rail-passenger-ablaze-in-unprovoked-attack>

² <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/85-flight-attendants-dealt-unruly-passenger-2021-survey/story?id=79127637>

Transportation & Warehousing (12,819 people).³ That is why I am working to prioritize ensuring transit workers are safe while doing their job. No one should fear going to work.

- 9-1-1 Dispatchers: As a former LAPD 9-1-1 dispatcher, I want to emphasize the increasingly complicated and difficult job that 9-1-1 dispatchers face without the resources available to engage in needed professional training. The last dedicated funding to help dispatchers directly was several years ago. For FY2023, I am working to support the inclusion of \$5 million in funding to allow all organizations that operate dispatch centers to engage in efforts to train their staff to be responsive. The National Highway Traffic Safety Administration composes one-half of the National 911 Office, which administered previous distributions of funding from the 911 Grant program.

I hope you will consider me a partner in your efforts to build up our nation's infrastructure and ensure that everyone in our country has accessible transportation in their community.

Sincerely,



Norma J. Torres
Member of Congress

³ <https://datausa.io/profile/geo/fontana-ca>